1490. ee. 25

THE

NUN:

AN

ELEGY.

By the AUTHOR of the MAGDALENS.

LONDON:

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, at Tully's-Head, Pall-Mall.

MDCCLXIV.

[Price Six Pence.]

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

PHILIP STANHOPE,

EARL of CHESTERFIELD.

THIS ELEGY IS,

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,

INSCRIBED, BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

OBLIGED AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

THE NUN.

WITH each Perfection dawning on her Mind,
All Beauty's Treaſure opening on her Cheek,
Each flatt'ring Hope ſubdued, each Wiſh reſign'd,
Does gay *Ophelia* this lone Manſion ſeek?

Say, gentle Maid, what prompts Thee to forſake
The Paths, thy Birth and Fortune ſtrew with Flow'rs?
Thro' Nature's kind endearing Ties to break,
And waſte in cloyſter'd Walls thy penſive Hours?

Let ſober Thought reſtrain thine erring Zeal,
That guides thy Footſteps to the Veſtal Gate,
Leſt thy ſoft Heart (this Friendſhip bids reveal)
Like mine unbleſt ſhou'd mourn like mine too late.

Does ſome angelic lonely-whiſp'ring Voice,
Some ſacred Impulſe, or ſome Dream divine,
Approve the Dictates of thy early Choice?—
Approach with Confidence the aweful Shrine.

There kneeling at yon Altar's marble Baſe
(While Tears of Rapture from thine Eye-lid ſteal,
And ſmiling Heav'n illumes thy Soul with Grace)
Pronounce the Vow, Thou never can'ſt repeal.

Yet if miſled by falſe-entitled Friends,
Who ſay—" That Peace with all her comely Train,
" From ſtarry Regions to this Clime deſcends,
" Smooths ev'ry Frown, and ſoftens ev'ry Pain:

" That Veſtals tread Contentment's flow'ry Lawn,
" Approv'd of Innocence, by Health careſt:
" That rob'd in Colours bright, by Fancy drawn,
" Celeſtial Hope ſits ſmiling at their Breaſt."

Suſpect

Suſpect their Syren Song and artful Style,
Their pleaſing Sounds ſome treach'rous Thought conceal:
Full oft does Pride with ſainted Voice beguile,
And ſordid Int'reſt wear the Maſk of Zeal.

A Tyrant-Abbeſs here perchance may reign,
Who, fond of Pow'r, affects th' Imperial Nod,
Looks down diſdainful on her Female Train,
And rules the Cloyſter with an Iron Rod.

Reflection ſickens at the Life-long Tie,
Back-glancing Mem'ry acts her buſy Part,
Its Charms the World unfolds to Fancy's Eye,
And ſheds Allurement on the wiſhful Heart.

Lo! Diſcord enters at the ſacred Porch,
Rage in her Frown, and Terror on her Creſt:
Ev'n at the hallow'd Lamps ſhe lights her Torch,
And holds it flaming to each Virgin Breaſt.

But ſince the Legends of Monaſtic Bliſs
By Fraud are fabled, and by Youth believ'd,
Unbought Experience learn from my Diſtreſs,
Oh! mark my Lot, and be no more deceiv'd.

Three Luſtres ſcarce with haſty Wing were fled,
When I was torn from ev'ry weeping Friend,
A thoughtleſs Victim to the Temple led,
And (bluſh ye Parents) by a Father's Hand.

Yet then what ſolemn Scenes deceiv'd my Choice?
The pealing Organ's animating Sound,
The choral Virgins' captivating Voice,
The blazing Altar, and the Prieſts around:

The Train of Youths array'd in pureſt white,
Who ſcatter'd Myrtles as I paſs'd along:
The thouſand Lamps that pour'd a Flood of Light,
The Kiſs of Peace from all the Veſtal Throng:

The Golden Cenſers toſs'd with graceful Hand,
Whoſe fragrant Breath *Arabian* Odor ſhed:
Of meek-ey'd Novices the circling Band,
With blooming Chaplets wove around their Head.

—My willing Soul was caught in Rapture's Flame,
While ſacred Ardor glow'd in ev'ry Vein:
Methought applauding Angels ſung my Name,
And Heav'n's unſullied Glories gilt the Fane.

This temporary Tranſport ſoon expir'd,
My drooping Heart confeſs'd a dreadful Void:
E'er ſince, alas! abandon'd, uninſpir'd,
I tread this Dome to Miſery allied.

No wakening Joy informs my ſullen Breaſt,
Thro' opening Skies no radiant Seraph ſmiles,
No Saint deſcends to ſooth my Soul to Reſt,
No Dream of Bliſs the dreary Night beguiles.

Here hagard Diſcontent ſtill haunts my View;
The ſombre Genius reigns in ev'ry Place:
Arrays each Virtue in the darkeſt Hue,
Chills ev'ry Pray'r, and cancels ev'ry Grace.

I meet her ever in the chearleſs Cell,
The gloomy Grotto and unſocial Wood:
I hear her ever in the Midnight Bell,
The hollow Gale, and hoarſe-reſounding Flood.

This caus'd a Mother's tender Tears to flow,
(The ſad Remembrance Time ſhall ne'er eraſe)
When having ſeal'd th' irrevocable Vow
I haſten'd to receive her laſt Embrace.

Full-well ſhe then preſag'd my wretched Fate,
Th' unhappy Moments of each future Day:
When lock'd within this Terror-ſhedding Grate,
My joy-deſerted Soul wou'd pine away.

Yet

Yet ne'er did her maternal Voice unfold
This cloyſter'd Scene in all its Horror dreſt:
Nor did ſhe then my trembling Steps withhold
When here I enter'd a reluctant Gueſt.

Ah! could ſhe view her only Child betray'd,
And let Submiſſion o'er her Love prevail?
Th' unfeeling Prieſt why did ſhe not upbraid?
Forbid the Vow, and rend the hov'ring Veil?

Alas! ſhe might not—Her relentleſs Lord
Had ſeal'd her Lips, and chid her ſtreaming Tear,
So Anguiſh in her Breaſt conceal'd its Hoard,
And all the Mother ſunk in dumb Deſpair.

But Thou who own'ſt a Father's ſacred Name,
What Act impell'd thee to this ruthleſs Deed?
What Crime had forfeited my filial Claim?
And giv'n (oh blaſting Thought!) thy Heart to bleed?

If then thine injur'd Child deſerve thy Care,
Oh haſte and bear her from this loneſome Gloom!
In vain—no Words can ſooth his rigid Ear:
And *Gallia*'s Laws have riveted my Doom.

Ye cloiſter'd Fair—ye cenſure-breathing Saints,
Suppreſs your Taunts, and learn at length to ſpare,
Tho' mid theſe holy Walls I vent my Plaints,
And give to Sorrow what is due to Pray'r.

I fled not to this Manſion's deep Receſs,
To veil the Bluſhes of a guilty Shame,
The Tenor of an ill-ſpent Life redreſs,
And ſnatch from Infamy a ſinking Name.

Yet let me to my Fate ſubmiſſive bow:
From fatal Symptoms if I right conceive,
This Stream *Ophelia* has not to flow,
This Voice to murmur, and this Breaſt to heave.

Ah!

BRITISH MUSEUM 30 SEP 59

Ah! when extended on th' untimely Bier
To yonder Vault this Form ſhall be convey'd,
Thoul't not refuſe to ſhed one grateful Tear,
And breathe the *Requiem* to my fleeting Shade.

With pious Footſtep join the ſable Train,
As thro' the lengthening Iſle they take their Way:
A glimmering Taper let thy Hand ſuſtain,
Thy ſoothing Voice attune the funeral Lay:

Behold the Miniſter who lately gave
The ſacred Veil, in Garb of mournful Hue,
(More friendly Office) bending o'er my Grave,
And ſprinkling my Remains with hallow'd Dew:

As o'er the Corſe he ſtrews the rattling Duſt,
The ſterneſt Heart will raiſe Compaſſion's Sigh:
Ev'n then no longer to his Child unjuſt,
The Tears may trickle from *a Father's* Eye.

F I N I S.